



CULTURAL GUIDE TO HONG KONG

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CULTURAL GUIDE TO HONG KONG

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Geography and Climate.....	2
History.....	2
Government.....	3
Economic System.....	3
Population Demographics.....	4
Population Conflicts.....	4
Verbal Communication.....	5
Languages.....	5
Greetings.....	5
Forms of Address and Titles.....	6
Giving Compliments.....	6
Non-Verbal Communication.....	7
Acceptable and Non-Acceptable Gestures.....	7
Physical Contact and Personal Space.....	7
Cultural Considerations.....	8
Important Characteristics.....	8
View of Foreigners.....	8
Concepts of Space and Privacy.....	8
Concept of Time in Business and Personal Life.....	9
View of Education.....	9
Appropriate Attire.....	9
The Role of Religion.....	10
Buddhism.....	10
Taoism.....	10
Feng Shui.....	11
Confucianism.....	11
Family Roles.....	12
Role of Men and Women.....	12
Role of Children and the Elderly.....	12

Social Occasions and Considerations.....	13
Weddings.....	13
Births.....	13
Funerals.....	14
Dining Out.....	15
Table Manners.....	15
Being Entertained in the Home.....	16
Gift-giving.....	17
Getting Out of the House.....	18
Theater.....	18
Sports Facilities.....	18
Parks and Beaches.....	19
Major Holidays.....	19
The Work Environment.....	20
Daily Life.....	21
Shopping.....	21
Transportation.....	22
Services: Phone, Internet, Postal.....	23
Hair Salons and Barber Shops.....	23
Hotels.....	23
Traveling.....	24
Crime Rate.....	24
Public Health.....	24
Behavior in Crisis Situations	25

INTRODUCTION

The mere mention of Hong Kong conjures up visions of an exotic foreign land. In fact, it is a place replete with intriguing contradictions, where the traditional world and the modern world have blended so well with each other. Modern container ships share the harbor with ancient Chinese fishing junks; traditional acupuncturists thrive, as does a nuclear medicine research center; Buddhist temples sit alongside Western churches and synagogues; a mass-transit underground railway competes with a fair number of rickshaws on the streets; and restaurants boast delicious cuisine from China and the rest of the world.

And, while communities of fishermen and monks still inhabit the territory, the throngs of smartly attired Chinese professionals working in Hong Kong's ultra-modern skyscrapers in the business districts attest to the technological wonder that is now Hong Kong.



Geography and Climate

Hong Kong is situated in the southeast of China. It is surrounded by the South China Sea on three sides and shares its northern border with China's Guangdong Province. It consists of four districts: Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and New Kowloon, the New Territories, and more than 230 Outlying Islands. Hong Kong's capital is Victoria, located in the northwest of Hong Kong Island. Victoria is also referred to as the Central District.

Hong Kong is about 410 square miles in size, making it roughly six times larger than Washington, DC. It has a hilly terrain, with its highest point being Victoria Peak, at an elevation of 1,800 feet above sea level.

Hong Kong's climate is governed by the monsoon, and annual precipitation averages 95 inches. Hong Kong actually lies within the tropics, but seasonal winds cause a greater temperature fluctuation than one would normally see in the tropics. In the summer, the temperature can range anywhere from 80°F to the mid-90s, with a humidity of 100%. Winters in Hong Kong are cooler and drier, with temperatures ranging from 40°F to about 60°F. Fall is considered the most pleasant season—and the best time to visit Hong Kong—because the humidity tends to be low and the temperature often hovers in the mid-70s.

The quality of the water is fairly high in Hong Kong, but the quality of the air is not. Due to the extremely high population density and the heavy traffic, Hong Kong's air pollution problem is an issue of major concern. The government monitors the situation closely, however, and issues daily reports on the quality of the air.

History

China has had a long history as an isolationist culture. Until the mid-1800s, it had very few ports open to foreign trade, with Hong Kong being one of the few. China had very little trade with the West until 1699, when the British East India Trading Company first began to do business in Hong Kong. The British soon monopolized Hong Kong as a trading port, and continued to do so until 1834, when China outlawed Britain's monopoly. The Opium War ensued, and Britain seized Hong Kong, placing it under British imperial control in 1841. In 1842, the Treaty of Nanking made Hong Kong a British colony.

The Kowloon Peninsula and Stonecutter's Island were added to the deal with the signing of the Treaty of Peking in 1860. The land beyond Kowloon, known as the New Territories, was obtained in 1898 through a 99-year lease, which ex-

pired June 30, 1997. The 1984 Joint Declaration, drawn up between government officials of Great Britain and the People's Republic of China, returned Hong Kong—albeit under numerous stipulations—to Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 1997. In the wake of the return of Hong Kong to Chinese control, a large number of Hong Kong's educated business-class residents fled to Australia, Canada, and the United States.

Despite the political events of 1997, business is still booming in Hong Kong. It is now the world's most active container port, as well as the world's seventh-largest financial center. It is also one of Asia's worldliest and most modern cities.



Government

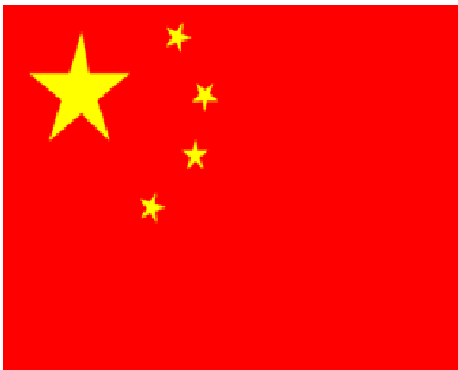
Hong Kong—formerly the British Dependent Territory of Hong Kong—is currently a Special Administrative Region for the People’s Republic of China. It operates under a system of government described as a “limited democracy,” which is currently protected by China’s “One Country, Two Systems” policy. This policy allows Hong Kong to maintain its own systems of government, economy, and education until 2047, when it is expected to relinquish its authority to China. Until then, Hong Kong will remain relatively autonomous, except in the case of national defense, which will remain in the hands of the PRC. The systematic process for making the complete adjustment to full Chinese sovereignty is outlined in the Basic Law, which was drawn up in 1990 and serves as Hong Kong’s constitution. For the time being, Hong Kong retains its own elected chief executive—as well as a 14-member Legislative Council—but the head of state is still considered to be the president of China.

Economic System

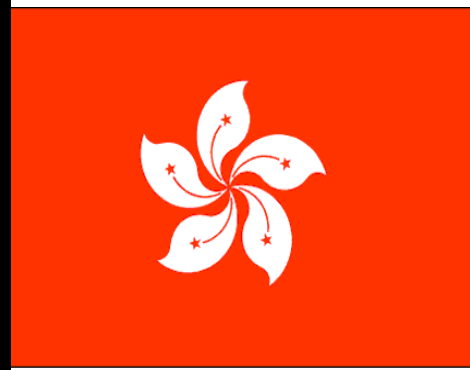
Hong Kong’s economic system has been permitted to remain as it was; therefore, the unit of currency is the Hong Kong Dollar (1 USD = 7.8 HKD), not the Chinese Yuan, which is used by the PRC. Hong Kong’s economic system is actually quite remarkable. Considering the fact that it borders the largest Communist/Socialist country in the world, Hong Kong’s status as one of the most rampantly capitalistic cities on the planet is especially significant and impressive.



Hong Kong’s currency



The “One Country, Two Systems” policy will allow Hong Kong to remain relatively independent until 2047.



Population Demographics

Hong Kong has the highest population density in the world. An average of 15,000 people inhabit each square mile, and in some parts of Kowloon, that number can be as high as 480,000 per square mile. The total population is around 7,400,000 (July 2003 est.). This means that a population more than 12 times the size of that of Washington, D.C. inhabits an area only six times as large. Needless to say, overcrowding—and all of the problems that go along with it—is a huge concern in Hong Kong.

The population is fairly homogenous, with over 95% of the residents being of Chinese descent. The remainder of the population is primarily a mix of Westerners, Filipinos, and other Asian ethnicities. Hong Kong also has visible communities of Australians, Canadians, Japanese, Indians, Thais, Pakistanis, French, and Malaysians.

The majority of the Chinese people in Hong Kong are Cantonese, having escaped the nearby mainland province of Guangdong during the political upheaval of the Cultural Revolution. While the Cantonese retain many cultural features of their counterparts on the mainland, Western presence in Hong Kong has influenced their behavior a great deal.



Hong Kong's population is fairly homogenous, but there is still great diversity among the residents.

Population Conflicts

Several conflicts have arisen in the wake of the return of Hong Kong to Chinese power; however, few have gained as much international attention as the plight of the practitioners of Falun Gong.

Falun Gong, or Falun Dafa, is a religion based on peace and self-control. It was first introduced in 1992 by its creator, Li Hongzhi. Falun Gong became enormously popular, and was soon being practiced in more than 40 countries. This made the Chinese government nervous because they feared that any mass social movement could eventually be aimed at overthrowing the government. Falun Gong was outlawed by the Chinese government, which deemed it an “evil cult,” but it remained legal in Hong Kong even after 1997. Many people felt that this would be a test of China’s sincerity regarding the Basic Law, since the Chinese government had alleged that the Falun Gong wished to turn Hong Kong into its headquarters while planning to overthrow the Chinese government.

There are between 80,000,000 and 100,000,000 practitioners of Falun Gong in the world. Many of those who practice in China must either live in Hong Kong or practice in secret because anyone who is caught in the PRC with Falun Gong documents—even a resident of Hong Kong—can be detained and jailed. Many are tortured or even killed, as well.

At the current time, Falun Gong is both legal and tolerated in Hong Kong; however, many fear that this tolerance is fading. The practitioners protest frequently, and the public disturbances they cause are beginning to tax the patience of the law enforcement community.

Verbal Communication

Languages

The primary dialect of Chinese that is spoken in Hong Kong is Cantonese. Unlike Mandarin, Cantonese has a loud, harsh, nasal sound, and upon first hearing it, some Westerners think that the speakers are engaged in a heated discussion or even an argument.

Because of the British colonization, English is widely spoken as a second language. Signs are posted in English and Cantonese, and many of the Hong Kong policemen speak English. Those that do speak English wear red bands on their arms to distinguish themselves. Foreigners usually find that they can get by without Cantonese. As a tonal language, it is difficult for a foreigner to master, but learning a few polite, common phrases in Cantonese will be greatly appreciated by the Hong Kong Chinese. Even if a foreigner cannot master the tones, common phrases will probably be understood.

Greetings

Traditionally, the people of Hong Kong will greet each other with a bow, but a handshake is almost always acceptable. Men, women, and children typically will all shake hands with a Westerner, although

some older people may not be comfortable doing so. Because of this, it is best to wait for older people to offer a hand before offering yours. A kiss is always completely inappropriate as a greeting.

When meeting someone new, do not ask too many personal questions; however, at the same time, do not be surprised if they are asked of you. Also, be calm and polite when dealing with people. Aggressive behavior causes a person to lose face, and is very repellent to the Hong Kong Chinese.

When people in Hong Kong meet for the first time, they exchange “name cards,” which are a lot like business cards. When receiving a name card, it should be accepted with both hands and then examined intently. Even if you do not understand the implication of what is on the card, inspect it studiously, anyhow. You, too, should have name cards printed up. They should contain your name, your title, the address of your company, your office phone number, and your company’s logo. They should be written in English on one side and classical Chinese characters on the other. Use both hands to present your name card, and do so with the Chinese side facing up. This exchange aids in networking, which is very important in Hong Kong.

In English	In Cantonese	Pronunciation
Good Morning	<i>Jóu Sahn</i>	Joe-sun
Good Afternoon	<i>N’ang</i>	N-on
Good Night	<i>Jóu Táu</i>	Joe-tow

More Information on Verbal Communication

Forms of Address and Titles

Ranks and titles are extremely important in Hong Kong, as it is a very hierarchical society. If someone is a doctor, a professor, or has any other distinguishing title, use the title along with his/her surname unless invited to do otherwise.

When addressing a man, “Mr.” preceding his last name is an appropriate form of address. Address a woman with “Madam” preceding her maiden name, because Hong Kong women typically retain their maiden names when they marry. Also, remember that Chinese surnames typically precede given names, which can be confusing.

Do not use anyone’s first name without being invited to do so. When in doubt about using titles or certain forms of address, it is never inappropriate to ask for someone’s preference.

Giving Compliments

Compliments are valued highly in Hong Kong, so be liberal with them; however, do not expect that they will be received with a “thank-you.” It is considered impolite in Hong Kong to accept a compliment, so your compliments will all be denied politely. Take a cue from this, and politely deny compliments paid to you, as well.



Shaking hands is acceptable with all ages and with both genders in Hong Kong

In English	In Cantonese	Pronunciation
Yes	<i>Haih</i>	Hi
No	<i>M'haih</i>	Mm-hi
Please	<i>Ching Néih</i>	Ching-nay
Thank You	<i>Dó Jeh</i>	Doh-jeh
Good-Bye	<i>Joi Geen</i>	Joy-geen
How Are You?	<i>Ni Hou Ma?</i>	Nee how mah

Non-Verbal Communication

Acceptable and Non-Acceptable Gestures

It is important to be careful about the gestures you use while in Hong Kong. What is acceptable in the West may be extremely rude in Hong Kong, and vice versa.

To beckon someone, extend your arm with the palm facing downward, then wiggle the fingers. Beckoning with only one finger is very rude, as is pointing with the index finger. Also, gesturing with a closed fist held up in the air is considered obscene.

Members of the opposite sex do not generally hold hands or show physical affection in public, as this behavior is frowned upon. It is, however, perfectly acceptable for two people of the same gender to hold hands in public. It is a sign of friendship, not an indication of sexual orientation.

When in public, it is acceptable for women to sit with their legs crossed, but this is not acceptable for men. Winking is unacceptable from either gender, but is especially rude from women.

Physical Contact and Personal Space

Because Hong Kong is so densely packed with people, the concept of personal space is different than it is in the United States. People are accustomed to being in large crowds; they are jostled, pushed, and bumped in the city. People in Hong Kong also tend to stand closer to one another when speaking than people do in the United States. Nevertheless, aside from a handshake in greeting, physical contact with the Hong Kong Chinese is not welcomed.



With one of the highest population densities on earth, public places in Hong Kong are typically *very* crowded. Even so, physical contact—aside from the jostling that is typical of a busy metropolis—is not welcomed by the Hong Kong Chinese.

Cultural Considerations

Important Characteristics

Loyalty and trust are two of the most important character traits in Hong Kong, and they are valued highly. Because of the homogeneity of the culture, the Hong Kong Chinese have developed a certain inherent trust for each other and a certain level of distrust for any non-Chinese.

Cooperation is also valued. Hong Kong, despite being fast-paced and extremely competitive, is still a collectivist society at heart. "As a collectivist society," writes one author, "they hold group loyalty above personal feelings." Therefore, despite any obvious manifestation of individual competitiveness in Hong Kong, the best interest of the *group* is still put first.

One of the most intrinsic characteristics of the Hong Kong Chinese is the desire to never lose face. This desire is so strong, that it can cause the Hong Kong Chinese to be extremely evasive and euphemistic if they are asked a yes/no question to which the answer is "no." Yes/no questions should be avoided because they can cause discomfort and embarrassment, leading to a loss of face.

Losing face tends to be associated with some form of public embarrassment, such as committing a *faux pas*; however, one can also lose face through the actions of someone close to him or her. Any action performed by a member of a collectivist society does not reflect only upon the individual who performed it. Rather, anything a person does or says is a reflection on his

family, colleagues, and other close affiliates. It is therefore important to try to be gracious, because if you humiliate or embarrass a person from Hong Kong, it is very likely that they will no longer wish to have anything to do with you. Conversely, though, if you are able to help someone save face, your friendship will become all the more valued.

View of Foreigners

Although Hong Kong is comprised primarily of ethnic Chinese, it still has a fairly long history of openness to foreigners. This is due mostly to its colonization by the British, which established a tradition of foreign presence in Hong Kong.

On the other hand, there is also a long history of feelings of Chinese cultural superiority. For this reason, you may sometimes be referred to as "foreign devil." It is best not to take offense at this.

Also, all Caucasians may be referred to collectively as "Europeans." There is no need to correct this. The use of "European" refers to a race, not a heritage.

Concepts of Space and Privacy

In some ways, privacy is difficult to maintain in Hong Kong. In a country where each square mile may be packed with several hundred thousand people, crowding and a lack of privacy when outside of the home are normal.

More Information on Cultural Considerations

Space is a rare commodity in Hong Kong, so it is valued very highly. In the city, it is almost impossible to walk down the street without being bumped and jostled. Public transit is also extremely crowded. There are parks, but they are also completely packed much of the time—especially on holidays.

When it comes to saving face, though, privacy is maintained. Certain topics that could potentially be very embarrassing to someone—such as sex, divorce, and marital problems—are never spoken about with anyone outside of the family.

Concept of Time in Business and Personal Life

In Hong Kong, time is money; therefore, appointments are always made well in advance, and punctuality is expected. There really is no such thing as being “fashionably late,” particularly for a foreigner. If you are ever late to any function in Hong Kong—regardless of the reason—you should apologize profusely. Whether your lateness was due to traffic, oversleeping, or getting stuck in the subway, be respectful and take responsibility for it.

Leisure time is somewhat limited, due to the high work ethic in Hong Kong. Many people work 45-hour weeks or more, so there really is very little free time in many Hong Kong residents’ lives. Still, there are several holidays throughout the year, during which the people of Hong Kong are able to spend time with their families and friends. During these holidays, a lot of people like to go to the public parks, to the New Territories for some time away from the crowds, or even take a hydrofoil over to Macao for some gambling. For the little leisure time available in the average busy Hong Kong work schedule, there are certainly enough

exciting activities to fill it up.

View of Education

The Hong Kong Chinese greatly value education. It is mandatory that children in Hong Kong attend school from age five through age 16, and parents expect their children to perform well.

The government of Hong Kong actually allocates the largest share of its national budget each year to educational funding. There are ten degree-granting universities, as well as a large number of excellent primary and secondary schools. Hong Kong has a literacy rate of roughly 94%, which is far above the world average of 77%.

Appropriate Attire

Hong Kong is a very trendy and fashionable place, and the clothing that people wear there is very similar to what is worn in the West. Jeans are appropriate for both genders, but it is generally only acceptable for men to wear shorts in public. In any situation, it is wise for women to avoid wearing anything too low-cut or revealing.

Business dress is appropriate for most occasions, such as work, business meetings, banquets, or visiting in someone’s home. Unless an event is specifically deemed “formal,” a person can almost never go wrong with business attire.

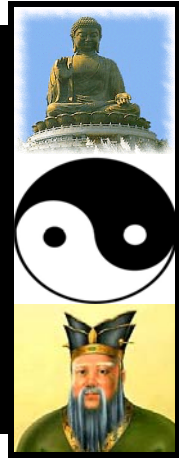
When visiting a temple, people of both genders should take care to dress modestly. At a holy site, one must dress conservatively; therefore, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt are best for men, and a long skirt or pants plus a long-sleeved shirt are best for women.

The Role of Religion



The three primary belief systems in Hong Kong are Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. All three play a prominent role in daily life. Taoist and Buddhist rituals are performed at open shrines and temples, where prayers, joss (incense), and symbolic fruits are offered to the gods. Family shrines are found in many Chinese homes, and often contain pictures of deceased ancestors. Wealthier Chinese may build large ancestral halls or buy altar space at a public temple and display photos of departed ancestors.

About 8% of Hong Kong Chinese are Christian, but elements of the three predominant Eastern religions are often intermingled in their practice of Christianity. Ancestral worship, numerology, folk religion, and superstition also play a part in the religious life of the Hong Kong Chinese.



Buddhism

Buddhism is a religion that was founded in India by Siddhartha Gotama in the sixth century BC. His goal was to find the Golden Midway between extreme self-indulgence and extreme self-denial. One of the primary focuses of the religion is to disengage oneself from earthly desires. If a person accomplishes this, he is said to have reached Enlightenment, or Nirvana.

Siddhartha devised the “Four Noble Truths,” which, if followed, are said to bring about Nirvana. The Four Noble Truths are:

1. The world has great suffering
2. Suffering is caused by earthly desires or attachments to earthly things
3. If a person can free himself from all earthly desires, he will reach Nirvana
4. One who wishes to reach Nirvana must also meditate and follow the Eightfold Path.

The world’s largest bronze statue of the Buddha can be found in Hong Kong, on Lantau Island. It is called the “Tian Tan Buddha” because the base upon which it rests looks like the Temple of Heaven (“Tian Tan”). The statue weighs 500,000 pounds and is almost 90 feet tall.

Taoism

Taoism—also called Daoism—literally means “The Way.” Its primary focus is on the balance that exists in the world, which means that it accepts the fact that positive forces could not exist without their negative counterparts. For instance, happiness could not exist without sadness, peace could not exist without unrest, and sweetness could not exist without bitterness.

Taoism, like Buddhism, was founded sometime during the sixth century BC. Its founder is believed by many to be Lao-Tsu, author of the *Tao te Ching*. The influences of Taoism’s desire for balance can be seen in such practices as acupuncture, martial arts, and *feng shui*.

More about the Role of Religion

Feng Shui

Feng shui literally means “wind and water,” and it is a Taoism-based practice that permeates many aspects of life in Hong Kong. Through *feng shui*, people attempt to achieve a balance by determining the position of buildings in relation to natural bodies before they build them. For example, it is considered auspicious for a building to face a body of water or to have mountains behind it, so the most premium building sites are those that are near mountains or water. If the location of the building cannot accommodate *feng shui* principles, then the furniture, mirrors, and plants inside it must be re-arranged in order to achieve balance. *Feng shui* is considered necessary for any structure that may contain human beings, whether it is a skyscraper, an apartment building, or a tomb. *Feng shui* is taken very seriously in Hong Kong, so it is important not to belittle it. Hong Kong residents will not take kindly to any rude comments about this practice.



Confucianism

Confucianism is not necessarily a religion. It is, rather, an ethical code that establishes whom a person's loyalties should belong to. In China, primary loyalty is to the family.

Confucianism, like Buddhism and Taoism, arose around the sixth century BC. Its founder, Confucius (K'ung Fu Tzu), established his “Five Cardinal Relationships,” which he felt governed human interaction. These relationships are:

1. Ruler – Subject
2. Father – Son
3. Husband – Wife
4. Older Brother – Younger Brother
5. Friend – Friend

These relationships are still typically revered in Chinese society, and form a basis for human interaction. Confucian ideals have an especially profound effect on how people regard birth, adolescence, marriage, and death, establishing fairly stringent rules that must be followed when a person goes through any of these important, life-changing events.

The image to the left is a *Bagua*, which means “eight sides.” The *Bagua* is used by the *feng shui* master to determine the most auspicious positioning for buildings and their contents

Family Roles

The Role of Men and Women

The most important thing in the world to the Hong Kong Chinese is family. Men are generally the breadwinners and are considered head of the household, while women have traditionally been viewed as family caretakers— but this is changing. Recent workforce over-subscription and the availability of childcare by family members or nannies has resulted in many more women being employed.

One of the main reasons why Hong Kong women are finding it easier to get into the workforce is because of the widespread availability of the *amah*, which is a Filipino nanny. Finding live-in Chinese help is nearly impossible,

but finding an *amah* is not especially difficult. They typically function as live-in help, and must be legal immigrants in order to be eligible for hire. The minimum wage for an *amah* is currently about USD \$500.00 per month, plus about USD \$50.00 extra in food expenses. The employer must also supply medical care, uniforms, and round-trip airfare home once every two years.



Two Hong Kong children

The Role of Children and the Elderly

In Hong Kong society, age is revered. People in Hong Kong are greeted in order of their ages, beginning with the eldest person present. Older people are taken care of by their grown children, and, until very recently, the practice of putting one's elderly parents into a nursing home was absolutely unheard of. With many households becoming two-income households, however, this practice is becoming more and more common.

Children are also revered, albeit in a different way. Male children are number one among Hong Kong couples, but childless couples are pitied much more than couples that only have daughters. If a couple has only one child, they will be encouraged to have more; in fact, Hong Kong parents and other family members are

thought to be child-loving to a fault. Consequently, until children are about four years old, they are indulged, spoiled, and rarely disciplined.

This treatment does come to an end, though. Upon reaching school age, children are expected to maintain high academic standards, because acceptance into the better schools is based on academic achievement— even for kindergarten. Parents demand academic excellence from both sons and daughters, with the heaviest burden usually falling upon the eldest child.

Social Occasions and Considerations

Weddings

Marriages are no longer prearranged by parents, and couples tend to marry in their late twenties. Couples will often consult a lunar calendar in order to figure out an auspicious wedding date.

The marriage itself is ceremonial, but not fancy or religious. Most couples are married at the Marriage Registry, because marriages performed only by clergy are not legally recognized in Hong Kong. The actual wedding is generally attended by no one but the bride and groom.

A huge banquet at a nice restaurant follows the wedding. Hundreds of guests may be in attendance. The bride wears a traditional red dress, as red is a lucky color, but during the dinner, she changes her clothes at least once. Usually, after arriving and greeting her guests, the bride changes into Western-style eveningwear. Consequently, it is a very bad idea for anyone to wear white to one of these banquets, as it is the color of mourning and is considered unlucky at a wedding.

It is very likely that you will be invited to one of these events if you have any Chinese friends or colleagues who get married while you are in Hong Kong. These are very extravagant events, and everyone that the couple knows is invited. Almost no excuse is acceptable for not attending, other than previous plans, some kind of emergency, or a last-minute medical crisis.

An appropriate gift for such an event is either a gift certificate or a cash gift that will, at the very least, cover the cost of your meal. In Hong Kong, these extravagant banquets have become the norm because the guests understand that they are to give a monetary gift that assists the bride and groom in paying for the affair. Not to do so is detrimental to the new couple, as it will cause them to start their married life out in very deep debt.

Births

The birth of a baby in Hong Kong is a very happy occasion. The people of Hong Kong love babies and children, and they tend to dote quite a lot on them.

As a new mother rests with her infant, she is fed a soup that is believed to have special health properties. The primary ingredients in this soup are hard-boiled eggs, vinegar, ginger, and pigs' feet. Servings of this soup are also offered to guests who come to visit the new baby, as this soup is considered to be a treat.

There are no baby showers in Hong Kong, which is partly because of superstition. Historically, China had a fairly high infant mortality rate, so the births of new babies were not celebrated until they had reached at least one month of age. This tradition is kept alive today, in the *mun yuht*, which means "full month." The Hong Kong

version of a baby shower, *mun yuht* is celebrated after the baby is already one month old. Secluding the child for the first month of life is still common because mothers are afraid that too many visitors could either attract evil spirits or frighten the baby, causing it to take ill.

While on the subject of attracting evil spirits, it is important to note that it is not considered a good idea to praise the looks or the health of a baby or a young child. Some people fear that this, too, could attract the attention of jealous spirits, and that some harm could come to the child. Some parents will even playfully call their sons by a not-so-lovely nickname, in order to deter the evil spirits.

White is the color of mourning, and wreaths of white chrysanthemums are traditionally sent to a Hong Kong funeral.



Funerals

Depending on religion, funeral services can be quite varied, but they generally take place in the form of a memorial service. If the death was accidental, a Taoist service would take place at the site. Offerings would be made, and the victim's spirit would be led back to the funeral parlor to be reunited with the body. It is a traditional belief that in a fatal accident, the soul of the victim leaves the body and wanders around the scene of death.

A Buddhist funeral service may take place in a temple. People clasp their hands and

bow three times in the direction of the deceased. A fourth bow is made to the left side of the temple in the direction of the deceased person's family as a means of paying respect.

When attending a funeral in Hong Kong, it is of the utmost importance that you do not mention the cause of death, or even the word "death" itself. Refer to it, instead, euphemistically; for example, you could say "passed on" or "went over the mountain." Referring to death directly, in any situation, is thought to bring extremely bad luck.

White envelopes with a red stripe down the center are given out following a memorial service. The contents are a piece of candy (to take away the bitterness), a handkerchief (to dry final tears), and a coin, which should be given away or spent before you return home.

White is the traditional mourning color at funerals. During the mourning period after the funeral, which lasts about three weeks, family members wear somber colors. The

men wear a swatch of black pinned to a shirt, and the women wear a flower made of yarn in their hair, in shades of white, green or blue.

Sending flowers for a funeral is common in Hong Kong, but they should be sent ahead of time. Traditionally, white chrysanthemums are used. If you are in any doubt as to what you should do, let a florist handle it. And if you are contributing to a family fund, you should give an uneven amount of money and an uneven amount of bills.

Dining Out

There are more than 30,000 restaurants in Hong Kong, so there is never any lack of fascinating and delicious cuisine. Hong Kong offers a wide array of international cuisines, as well as plenty of local delicacies.

A typical Chinese banquet consists of six to ten dishes, served one after the other. The food is culturally symbolic and is enjoyed for its tastiness, symbolism, rarity, texture, and medicinal value.

Bird-nest soup, shark-fin soup, and bear paw may not appeal to you, but these dishes are viewed as delicacies and are appreciated for their rarity. Sweet foods are good omens, and fish, which is generally served toward the end of a meal, symbolizes plenty. Soup is served as a last course and is thought to aid digestion.

The most famous of the local delicacies in Hong Kong is *dim sum*. *Dim Sum* restaurants are open from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., so get there early because they fill up very fast. In these establishments, the waiters come around with trays of *dim sum*—which are mostly steamed dumplings—and the customers pick what they would like. The bill is then tallied by counting the number of plates each customer has. The tea is often free, and you can indicate that you would like more by inverting your teapot's lid.

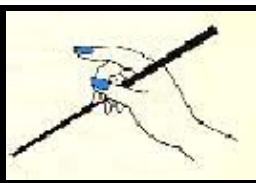
Service charges are generally included, but check the bill to make sure. If they were not included, add on 10% as a tip.

While sampling the wide variety of food available in Hong Kong, it is usually wise to avoid the street vendors. Their hygiene standards are much lower than those of restaurants.

Table Manners

Table manners differ the world over; therefore, what is polite in one country may be unthinkable in another. Since dining together is so popular in Hong Kong, it is important to understand the protocol for basic table manners.

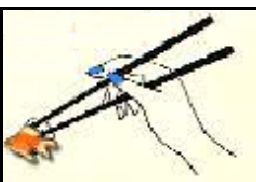
First and foremost, it is imperative that you learn to use chopsticks, and that you follow a few important rules regarding their use. The most basic of these rules is that the narrow end is for eating and the wider end is for serving yourself. When your chopsticks are not in use, they should rest side-by-side on a chopstick-holder. When using chopsticks to pick up food from a communal tray, never take something from the tray and put it directly into your mouth. Also, it is considered impolite to root around in the serving tray with your chopsticks, looking for the best piece. Just take the piece that is closest to you. Lastly, you should never stick your chopsticks straight down into your rice bowl, as this is how rice is offered to the dead.



Step One: Hold one chopstick as you would hold a pencil, and extend the index finger



Step Two: Place second chopstick between the thumb and the forefinger



Step Three: Keeping the lower chopstick stationary, pick up your food and enjoy!

While on the subject of rice, it is important to note that rice is just a filler in Hong Kong; it is not meant to be consumed in large quantities. Don't eat too much of it, especially at the end of the meal. To do so suggests to your hosts that you were not fed well enough. In fact, leaving a little bit of food on your plate serves as a good indication to your host that you have had enough and that you ate well. This is especially true when you are finishing the last course. A small portion must be left on the plate.

Traditional Chinese restaurants sometimes do not supply napkins, so be prepared to use the tablecloth for all of your hand-wiping, bone-piling, and shell-stacking needs. This is not rude at all. A messy table indicates that a good time was had, and that the food was satisfying. Slurping and belching are also not rude, as the Hong Kong Chinese feel that being noisy indicates that you are having a great time.

But while you are being messy, remember to eat slowly. Wolfing your food down makes the host think that you are not getting enough. Also, the average banquet in Hong Kong consists of at least 12 courses; therefore, you should make sure to eat slowly and leave room for at least a little bit of each course. Your Chinese hosts will appreciate it if you try everything, even if some things do not seem to be too appetizing. Barring food allergies and religious observance, there really is no reason why anything at the table would hurt you, so it is wise to save face—and to let your host save face—by graciously tasting anything that is offered.

During the meal, alcohol will be served. It will probably be cognac, brandy, or wine. It is perfectly fine to accept a drink or two,

but resist the urge to go overboard. There is already a notion among the Hong Kong Chinese that Westerners drink entirely too much, so special care should be taken not to perpetuate this supposition. Women, especially, should heed this, as it is not acceptable at all for a woman to be drunk in public in Hong Kong.

After you have finished eating, you may feel the urge to use a toothpick. When doing so, be sure to cover your mouth with your free hand; otherwise, your actions will thoroughly disgust everyone else present.

At the very end of the meal, a tray of tiny cups of bitter tea may be brought around. Take one sip and then spill the rest on the tray. This signifies the bond shared by people who dine together.

Once the meal is through, do not linger. The banquet itself takes hours, so everyone is ready to go when it's over. It is especially important that you leave promptly if you are the guest of honor, because no one else can leave until you do.

You do not need to bring a gift for your host at the restaurant, but it is polite to send a thank-you note after the banquet—and be prepared to reciprocate in the near future!

Being Entertained in the Home

Most entertainment—whether for business or personal reasons—is done in restaurants, because the dinners that are prepared for a special event are such lengthy and complicated affairs. Since the necessary preparations are extremely difficult, it makes sense to hold special dinners at a nice restaurant.

If you are invited to dine in the home of a Hong Kong Chinese family, though, you should consider it a great honor. Show up on time or slightly early, as punctuality is very important for such an occasion. When the meal is over, it is best to leave immediately afterward, since meals in Hong Kong are already very lengthy and the meal will probably end late. Also, remember to never offer to help cook or clean, as this will be a great embarrassment to your host.

The Importance of Gift-Giving

If you are visiting a Hong Kong family in their home, make sure to bring a gift, as Hong Kong is a society that values gift exchanging very much. The gift should be something that the entire family can enjoy, such as candy, fruit, artwork, or something from your own country. Other gifts that are appropriate are cognac, brandy, and high-quality baked goods. Flowers, however, are only for funerals, and do not make appropriate gifts when visiting someone at home.

Gifts should be wrapped in brightly colored paper, because giving an unwrapped gift is impolite. Red, green, and gold are good colors for gift-wrap, but white, black, and blue are considered unlucky. When giving someone a gift, offer it with both hands, but expect it to be refused at least once or twice.

This is considered polite in Hong Kong, so you should do the same when you are offered a gift. Also, never pressure anyone into opening a gift in front of you. In Hong Kong, gifts are to be opened privately in order to spare any potential embarrassment to the giver or the receiver.

Money and gift certificates are appropriate gifts for most occasions. When giving money, though, be sure to only give an even number of new bills in an even amount, although you should avoid amounts that contain the number four, for it is considered very unlucky. Do not give clocks, because they symbolize death; blankets, because they symbolize the suppression of prosperity; or green hats/headwear, because they either mean “you are a cuckold” or “your sister is a prostitute.”



**Hong Kong is a
gift-giving culture**

Getting Out of the House

Hong Kong has been described as being lived at street-level. Your senses will be aware of unfamiliar sights, smells, and noises. The clatter of mahjong tiles will be heard as they are maneuvered around a game table. The sweet scent of incense will waft from an ancestral shrine. A pungent odor from a food-stall will pique your sense of smell. And all the while as you walk along, you will begin to feel that half of Hong Kong's population is walking with you, while you are dodging your way through the other half.

Favorite early morning meeting places are the many teahouses, where Chinese have *yum cha* (dumplings and tea), and visit with one another. A few teahouses are well-known gathering places for Chinese men who enjoy the hobby of caring for songbirds. Some of the birds are very valuable and are housed in antique cages decorated with expensive ivory or jade carvings. Their cages are hung on brass rails above the tables while the men visit and compare birds. The loud singing of the birds echoes over Hong Kong's heavily trafficked streets.

Theater

There are many popular theaters in Hong Kong— both stage and screen. Western stage productions are often performed, and modern cinemas bring popular foreign-made movies to Hong Kong within a reasonable time. Cinemas offer advance ticket sales, and it is advisable to obtain tickets ahead of time. Lobbies have snack kiosks,

but you are allowed to bring your own food along. In fact, eating, smoking, and talking during shows often distract viewers who aren't accustomed to Chinese theaters.

Hong Kong's Urban Council venues include cultural activities such as The Hong Kong Philharmonic, lectures, recitals, and a contemporary dance company. The Festival of the Asian Arts and the Classic Film Festival

are annual events.

Sports Facilities

Most of Hong Kong's population lives in high-rise housing estates, and

there is little outdoor space where people can recreate. Because of this lack of space, the sports that have become popular are ones that can be played in relatively small areas. There are some public pools and tennis courts provided by the Urban Council, but recreational clubs are the most popular choice among people who can afford to join them. Sporting opportunities vary from club to club, as do entrance fees and waiting lists.

Tennis, squash, swimming, weightlifting, and aerobics are just some of the sports available at Hong Kong clubs. Unfortunately, due to the lack of sufficient outlets, waiting lists are very long, so it can take two years or more to join one of Hong Kong's recreational clubs.



A tennis court at the Consul General's residence and a swimming pool at the Shouson Hill Consulate housing complex are available to Consulate employees and their family members. Those interested can reserve the tennis court with the CLO.

There is also a modest gym with two treadmills, one stair-master, two cross-trainers, two cycles, and one multi-purpose machine on the lower ground floor of the Consulate, and it is open for use by Consulate employees and their family members. Showers and locker rooms are also located on the lower ground floor in the Consulate.

Parks and Beaches

There are parks and beaches in Hong Kong, but they tend to be severely overcrowded, as well as excessively noisy. On holidays, especially, it is probably best to avoid them, since there is hardly any room to move around or to enjoy the outdoors.

Major Holidays

There are five major festivals celebrated in Hong Kong as public holidays: Lunar New Year, *Ching Ming*, the Dragon Boat Races, *Chung Yeung* Festival, and the Mid-Autumn Festival.

The **Lunar New Year** is the biggest holiday of the year. It occurs in January or February on the Western calendar, but it has no specific date. The celebration of this holiday is extremely elaborate and extravagant. There are fireworks on the second day of the year, which are fired from boats in the harbor, and people hand out lots of *laissee*, which are lucky-money packets. These small, red envelopes are handed out to friends, colleagues, children, and employees. When you give out the *laissee*, you wish the recipient "*Fat choy*," which expresses a hope for great prosperity in the coming year. At this time of the year, employers give all of their Chinese employees a one-month salary bonus. If you employ anyone who is not Chinese, you do not have to offer this bonus.

Ching Ming is an early spring festival, and it is a time for visiting the graves of departed relatives. Graves are swept and tended, incense is lit, and then food is offered to the departed loved ones. Families will sometimes have a picnic on this day, eating the food they are offering to their ancestors. It is good to note that this is not a recommended day for travel, as the roads are absolutely jammed with people who are trying to get to the cemeteries.

All Holidays in Hong Kong

1 January (Western New Year)

Chinese New Year (January or February)

Ching Ming (Early spring)

Easter Weekend

21 April (Queen's birthday)

Dragon Boat Races (Late spring)

First weekday in July

First Monday in August

Mid-autumn Festival (Usually in September)

Chung Yeung (9th day of 9th month of lunar calendar)

25 December (Christmas)

26 December (Boxing Day)

The **Dragon Boat Races**—or *Tuen Ng Festival*—are held in the beginning of summer, and anyone can participate in them. The races are held in commemoration of a Chinese Poet named Qu Yuan, whose efforts to get his lord to listen to his lamentations about the rampant corruption in China were disregarded. Utterly despondent over being ignored, Qu Yuan threw himself into the Milo River. Fishermen who were out on the river raced to save him, but they were too late. The Dragon Boat Races commemorate this race to save this drowning poet.

The **Chung Yeung Festival** is celebrated on the ninth day of the ninth month of the lunar year. It is also a day for visiting the graves of departed ancestors. It is not a major holiday in Mainland China, nor was it a very big holiday in Hong Kong until relatively recently. Rather, the people of Hong Kong who were under British occupation managed to convince the British that *Chung Yeung* was a major Chinese holiday, and that they needed a day off for it.

The **Mid-Autumn Festival** occurs in late August or early September, and is a very lovely occasion. People gather in parks or go up onto Victoria Peak to celebrate, bringing along beautiful and elaborate lanterns, which are usually in the shape of animals. They also eat moon-cakes, which are made of ground lotus seeds, sesame seed paste, and egg yolk. The significance of these cakes is that, in the fourteenth century AD, there was an invasion by the Mongols, during which rebel forces smuggled messages to each other by stuffing them into little cakes. The moon cakes also represent the beauty of the large harvest moon.



Bird-shaped lantern for the Mid-Autumn Festival in Hong Kong

The Work Environment

The people of Hong Kong have a very strong work ethic, and most of them have a longer workweek than do Americans. In addition to working from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each weekday, many Hong Kong employees also work a half-day on Saturday. This 45-hour workweek is normal.

Whether in or out of the workplace, the Chinese are adept at networking to gain favors and respect, which is a concept known as *guan xi*. Similar to the American *quid pro quo*, *guan xi* denotes more than a favor for a favor; rather, it is described as "honeycombs of mutual aid against adversity." *Guan xi* is the barter for getting things done in both the work and social arena.

In the office, there is a well-defined hierarchy, which is based upon age and title. This hierarchy must be respected, because a failure to do so causes confusion and tension. Hong Kong bosses are not jovial with their employees because blurring the lines between supervisors and subordinates causes resentment. While such a hierarchy can seem undemocratic to a Westerner, an attempt to equalize the status of a group of Chinese office employees will not be appreciated.

Job descriptions in Hong Kong are carved in stone, so it is not a good idea to ask anyone to do something he typically is not supposed to do. If you ask someone to perform a task that is not his responsibility, he may say yes—since saying “no” would cause both of you to lose face—but he probably will not do it. Also, you must never do things that are not in your own job description, however menial or insignificant the tasks may seem. Performing tasks that are part of a subordinate’s job description will cause him to fear that his job is in danger.

Hong Kong and the United States have a *de facto* agreement in regards to employment, which makes employment a possibility for Foreign Service dependents. Opportunities for employment are good within the Mission, as well as without. Opportunities to teach English as a Second Language abound, as well as jobs in any other area that could normally be found in a bustling metropolis. The only restrictions are in the medical field, since many of these jobs require that the practitioner be certified to practice in a specific place.



Finding work for a trailing spouse should not prove to be too difficult in Hong Kong.

Daily Life

Shopping

Shopping opportunities abound in Hong Kong. There are malls, open markets, trendy boutiques, street stalls, outlets, and even entire districts devoted to shopping. Some of the popular shopping destinations are: Central District, Fleet Arcade, Pacific Place Mall, and the Kowloon Night Market. Many shops are backed by the Hong Kong Tourist Association, which means that they are reliable and trustworthy.

Bargaining is traditional in Hong Kong, and the Chinese think it is foolish to pay the price marked or the first price asked. You can bargain for almost anything. Two exceptions are the more modern stores and the markets where prices are marked. Nevertheless, even hotel jewelers are willing to discount merchandise. It is never offensive to try to bargain for something, but don't bargain unless you intend to buy.

Salespeople in Hong Kong typically work on commission, so don't be surprised if a salesperson trails you around a store. If you find this to be irritating, ask for the name of the associate and assure her that she will be the person you call for when you are ready to make a purchase.

It is lucky to make a sale to the first customer of the day, so try to get to the shops early. It is possible that you will get a really excellent deal.

Cash, local credit cards, and checks are the most widely accepted means of paying for merchandise. Some shops may add a surcharge to your purchase if you pay by U. S. credit card. Items generally cannot be returned or exchanged.

Transportation

Late-model cars are still a status symbol in Hong Kong, as government road taxes and parking fees make them expensive to operate. Consulate personnel are exempt from road taxes, however, and many expatriates like to have a car for shopping and sightseeing. Diplomats can also arrange credit cards through the Consulate for purchasing tax-free gasoline.

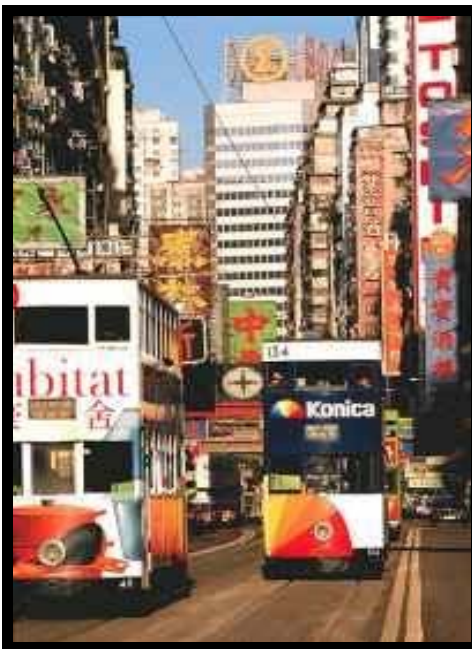
Still, there are several reasons why using public transit in Hong Kong is a better idea than driving. First and foremost, people drive on the left side of the road, which is difficult to adjust to; also, the cost of maintenance and parking is absolutely astronomical. Furthermore, import laws are strict, and the fees charged to convert a car from a left-side driver's seat to right-side driver's seat are exorbitant, making import a poor choice. Add all of this onto the fact that Hong Kong's air is already severely polluted, and the case for public transportation is quite clear. There are plenty of options for public transit. Among them are buses, trains, ferries, taxis, Mass-Transit Railway, and trams. They are all pretty cheap and very reliable.

Hong Kong's Mass-Transit Railway (MTR) is safe, fast, and efficient. Multi-ride fare cards, called "Octopus Cards," can be purchased in advance at any MTR station, or you can purchase a one-way fare card to your destination, much like the Metro in Washington, DC. Octopus cards are a real time-saver and are a convenient form of payment for the bus

and MTR.

Taxis are metered and can be hailed from the street or in one of the many taxi queues around the island, but there are some restrictions on where taxis can stop during rush-hour traffic. These areas are marked by street signs. Do not try to hail a taxi where you see a single or double yellow line along the curb, because it will not be able to pick you up or let you off in these areas.

Buses also make a great public-transit option. Double-decker buses are boarded at designated locations, and they run frequently. Mini-buses transport a maximum of 16 persons along a designated route, stopping anywhere along the way to pick up or drop off passengers, except along yellow-lined curbs. Both types of buses have differing systems of payment. Sometimes payment is collected upon boarding, and sometimes upon disembarking. If you are unsure, ask the driver. Transportation charges are marked on the coin drop or on the windshield of mini-buses.



Ferries are also a popular way to get around Hong Kong. The Star Ferry links Hong Kong Island with Kowloon, and it runs every ten minutes, from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. The ferries are cheap—only HK \$2.20 for a first-class fare—and are also very reliable.

Trams run through the Central District of Hong Kong Island to the western and eastern sections of town. The fee of HK \$2.00 is payable when you exit. The lower deck, which is second-class, costs HK \$1.70

Services: Phone, Internet, and Postal

Basic services in Hong Kong—such as phone, Internet, and mail—are easy to get and are relatively cheap.

Hong Kong has the highest per-capita mobile phone ownership in the world. Because of this, mobile phones are cheap to own, while public payphones are nearly impossible to find. If you do manage to find one, you can make a local call with no time limit for a flat fee; however, if you cannot find a public phone, just ask to use the phone in a hotel or other business. If your call is local, it will be covered under their monthly flat rate.

Internet access is also easy to come by, as Hong Kong is one of the most technologically “wired” places in the world. Hong Kong has one of the most comprehensive fiber-based cable systems in the world, and Internet service is ubiquitous. Internet cafés abound, and free Internet stations can even be found in some shopping areas.

The postal system is also very modern and very reliable, whether the destination of a parcel is domestic or international. The U.S. Navy has a U.S. Post Office set up at the Fleet Arcade, which is down by the pier. You can go there to get stamps and money orders, as well as to mail parcels and letters. Mail sent to the United States should get there in about a week.



The postal system in Hong Kong is very reliable.

Hair Salons and Barber Shops

Salons are modern and offer up-to-date, high-quality, and hygienic services. Many are operated by European hairdressers, who require appointments and charge exorbitant prices; however, local stylists are well trained and offer comparable services at much lower prices.

Hairdressers would be willing to use personal products brought to salons, but you should be able to provide directions for their proper use, as there are some differences between the services you would receive in the United States and those you would receive in Hong Kong. For example, shampoo is often applied to dry hair, and then worked in with water from a spray bottle. Afterward, the hair is immersed in water for final cleaning.

Hand and foot massage can be included in manicure and pedicure service for an additional fee.

Tipping service personnel is expected. Ten percent is adequate.

Hotels

Hong Kong hotels are among the best in the world, offering first-rate service. Hotel restaurants are popular with locals, as well as with tourists, and most hotels have restaurants offering Chinese and international cuisine. Hotels are a popular place for Hong Kong residents to host their banquets.

Check-in at a Hong Kong hotel is similar to check-in at a hotel in the States, although a passport is usually required for identification. Charge cards are honored, and children stay free in the same room with parents. Hotels offer laundry services, but it is cheaper to take your laundry to a neighborhood drycleaner.

Tipping is expected if you have someone carry your luggage. About HK \$20.00 is sufficient for two or three bags.

Traveling

Chek Lap Kok Airport, one of Hong Kong's three air terminals, is located on Lantau Island. Public transportation to Hong Kong Island from Chek Lap Kok is available by taxi, express train, or airport bus. Directions to transport are clearly marked in the arrival hall.

If you travel by taxi to Hong Kong Island, you will be required to pay the metered fare, plus roundtrip harbor tunnel fees. HK \$5.00 is charged for each piece of luggage taken in the taxi. A typical fare from the Chek Lap Kok Airport to Hong Kong Island—including tunnel fees—would be about HK \$350.00 – \$400.00, depending on the distance. This is about USD \$50.00 or \$60.00. Also available are the Airbuses and the Airport Express Train. The Airbuses run every ten to 20 minutes from various areas of Hong Kong, Kowloon, and the New Territories, and fares range from HK \$17.00 to HK \$45.00. The Airport Express is a high-speed dedicated rail service that runs between the airport and Hong Kong Island. The journey takes twenty-three minutes, with trains leaving every eight minutes. The Airport Express runs from 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. daily, and the adult fare to Hong Kong is HK \$100.00. Free Airport Express shuttle buses are available between some major hotels and Hong Kong Island.

Hong Kong is considered a jumping-off place for travel to nearby Asian countries. Flights are regularly scheduled and tickets are reasonable. Jetfoils (high speed boats) are available for day trips to nearby Macao, Shenzhen, or Guangzhou.

Crime Rate

The overall crime rate in Hong Kong is really quite low, and there is no specific

threat to Americans living or traveling in Hong Kong. Basic common sense should keep you safe. There are occasional muggings, but these crimes can be avoided if you secure your belongings and keep to well-lit areas where there are other people around. Violent crimes and sexual assaults are very rare.

If you do have a problem, talk to a policeman. The policemen who speak English are distinguished by a red armband. Police response—even to foreigners—is superb in Hong Kong. They will respond in less than two minutes for an emergency, and fewer than seven for a non-emergency. They are polite and helpful, as long as you are respectful toward them. Never, ever try to bribe a policeman.

Your consular corps identity card must be carried at all times, as Hong Kong police have the right to stop persons on the street and ask for identification. A trip to the police station and a fine are imposed for failing to produce identification when asked.

The diplomatic community in Hong Kong does not live under the constant threat of terrorism as diplomats do in some other countries. Thanks to the high degree of professionalism of the Hong Kong law enforcement authorities in preventing would-be terrorists from entering the Territory and in controlling street crime, you can expect a safe and happy tour here.

Public Health

Hong Kong is a very clean place with very high standards for sanitation. The water is potable, the conditions are modern, and the cleanliness surpasses even many Western cities.

Health services are also top-notch. Hospitals are Western-standard, and Hong Kong functions as a medevac point for travelers in China, Mongolia, and Vietnam. Although the services are expensive, they are among the best in Asia.

Of course, if whatever ails you isn't a major emergency, you can always opt for more traditional methods of healing. Hong Kong has a large number of acupuncturists, acupressurists, and herbalists. Just be sure to check the sanitary conditions of the facilities before deciding to have a procedure performed.

Behavior in Crisis Situations

There are several potential crisis situations in Hong Kong; among them are typhoons, hurricanes, landslides, and epidemics.

In 2002 Hong Kong was the epicenter for the outbreak of a new disease called SARS. SARS stands for "Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome," and it is a potentially deadly disease that is spread through coughing and sneezing. Some experts believe that the disease actually originated in Hong Kong, as the first reported case of SARS was documented there. Although the disease has remained fairly dormant since early 2003, cases still do surface from time to time. While Hong Kong has not had a case reported since June 2003, the nearby Guangdong Province has had cases of SARS appear as recently as late January 2004. Still, the threat of other natural

disasters remains much higher. Typhoons are dangerous tropical storms that are likeliest to occur in the late summer or the early fall. In lieu of their frequency in the tropics, Hong Kong's government has developed a superb warning system for them. It also has warnings for hurricanes and other tropical storms. When you first learn of a typhoon warning, you should curtail unnecessary trips and take precautions to prepare for the storm. Stock food and bottled water sufficient for a 48-hour period, and buy batteries for flashlights and radios. Close your windows and place masking tape over glass panes to prevent shattering. A window opposite the wind-side should be left open to compensate for differences in indoor and outdoor air pressure. Due to heavy rains, which often accompany typhoons, landslides and flooding may occur. Do not attempt to walk or drive through flooded areas.

The Hong Kong Government Typhoon Warning System disseminates information on typhoons that pass near or over Hong Kong. The warning system designates numbers corresponding to the severity. You should pay attention to the warnings and instructions, taking all necessary precautions.



SARS caused widespread panic in Hong Kong in 2002.

Consulate personnel and family members should get to know their Regional Security Officer (RSO) and Community Liaison Coordinator (CLO). The CLO is familiar with evacuation plans and safe havens, and can respond to rumors that may surface in times of crisis. The RSO and CLO give security briefings and seminars at post, and a video library on relevant topics is available to be checked out.

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Fishing Junk: http://community.webshots.com/s/image3/4/1/15/16640115gHDJwyfgXR_ph.jpg (Page 1)

Map of Hong Kong: <http://hong-kong.tourism-asia.net/gifs/hong-kong-map.jpg> (Page 2)

Flag of China: <http://www.hli.org/images/china%20flag%20large.gif> (Page 3)

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Lotus Woman: http://fr.yuanming.info/news_images/2003-8-8-scotman1.jpg (Page 4)

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